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ABSTRACT

This handbook describes how to plan and implement a support group for disabled youth in transition from school to work. It was developed from the experiences of a 3-year model program entitled Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth (ESN) which used support groups to accomplish its primary goal of creating "employability readiness" for disabled youth ages 16-21. Paired support-group facilitators consisted of a successfully employed disabled individual and a professional service provider. The handbook is divided into three major sections. Section One consists of four chapters which focus on planning issues: "Rationale: Why Set Up a Program?"; "Resources: What Is Necessary to Establish a Support Group?"; "Target Population: Whom Should the Group Serve?"; and "Facilitators: How Recruit, Train, and Supervise." Implementation is the theme of Section Two, which includes the remaining eight chapters: "Collaboration: How To Interact with School Districts and Agencies"; "Recruitment: Where to Find Youth"; "Transporation: How to Make Arrangements"; "Initial Implementation: How to Get the Group Up and Running"; "Interest and Attendance: How Can They Be Maintained?"; "Issues and Headaches: How to Solve Problems"; "Termination: How to End a Support Group"; and "Evaluation: Who Needs To Know How the Group Is Doing?" Sample forms are included. (JW)

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THE EMPOWERMENT DYNAMIC:

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING

A SUPPORT GROUP NETWORK

by

Robin Stephens and Pat Haley

The Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth is funded through the Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U. S. Department of Education (grant number G008430007). The project is housed at The Oregon Health Sciences University, Child Development and Rehabilitation Center, a University Affiliated Facility, from September, 1984 through July, 1987.

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Over the past three years, we have developed a model program focusing on implementing a support group network of youth with disabilities. We gained a wealth of knowledge from our mistakes, struggles, and never-ending interactions with one another. This knowledge was difficult to distill and write down in the form of a manual, yet, it is important to share what we have learned with everyone involved with youth, especially if those youth happen to be disabled.

Many people were integral to the success of the program. First and foremost among these are the young people involved in the support groups. Thanks goes to each one of the support group participants even if you only attended a few sessions, we appreciate your energy and willingness to try something new.

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INTRODUCTION

This report is a replication handbook which explains how to plan and implement a support group for persons with special needs. Its contents are based on the experiences gained by the Employability Support Network in the State of Oregon of planning and implementing over thirty support groups for disabled youth. This handbook is intended to be used by agencies and/or individuals who have an interest in utilizing support groups as a service modality for the population with which they are concerned. The report describes rationale for the use of support groups as well as specific guidelines for their implementation. What follows in this introduction is background information about the Employability Support Network and a brief description of chapter contents.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK OF DISABLED YOUTH (ESN)

The ESN was a three-year (1985-1987) model program which was designed to meet the needs of disabled youth, ages 16 through 21, who were in the transition between school and work. The program was coordinated through the auspices of the Oregon Health Sciences University's Child Development and Rehabilitation Center, a University Affiliated Program in Portland, Oregon. Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, the staff included a .8 FTE director, a .3 FTE coordinator, a 1.0 FTE administrative assistant, and 20 to 24 facilitators who worked ten hours per month.

Rationale which supported the need for such a project focused on the difficulties disabled youth have in transitioning to the work world and in finding employment. The transition period between school and work has traditionally been difficult for anyone in the late teen years or early adulthood, but it has been extremely difficult for those who have a disability. Many youth with disabilities need to develop skills to deal with the numerous attitudinal barriers in society and to explore their world of possibilities. Often, youth with disabilities are sheltered from the real world and therefore have even more unrealistic expectations about the work world than their able-bodied colleagues. Another scenario is that these youth may see a set of very limited vocational opportunities and may not realize they have many potentially useful marketable skills.

Unemployment rates for youth and adults with disabilities are staggering. The Social Security Administration places the rate of unemployment for all people with disabilities at 64% and for working-age people with cerebral palsy at 90%. People with disabilities who are employed often find themselves

with significantly lower wages than the average. Although many factors can contribute to this high level of unemployment and disparity of wages, a major reason is that disabled youth rarely have a chance to develop appropriate work attitudes or the social and interpersonal skills needed for successful employment.

The primary goal of this project was to create "employability readiness" for disabled youth. The methodology for accomplishing this goal was the use of support groups that were guided by a pair of facilitators; one was a successfully employed disabled individual, and the other, a professional service provider. In order to help youth with disabilities become ready for employment, the project focus was on having youth accomplish the following objectives: overcome feelings of isolation and invisibility, develop their self-concept, become more aware of jobs and community resources, improve communication skills, increase independent living skills, and learn their rights and how to assert them. The youth are also assisted in developing personal attributes, resources, and skills needed to obtain entry-level employment.

The support group was not intended to function as a therapy group, a "class" in job skills, or a job placement agency. It provided a supportive atmosphere and was a safe place for group members to discuss relevant topics regarding themselves, their disabilities, work skills, and individual potentials.

Facilitators experienced in assisting others to maximize their full potential were chosen by project staff. The disabled role model facilitators were adults with disabilities who had made successful transitions from dependent to independent living and the world of work. The youth, many of whom had never had contact with successful disabled role models, needed this association in order to verify and validate their feelings, fears, hopes, and goals. The professional service provider facilitators were teachers, counselors, psychologists, case managers, para-professionals, and advocates. Special skills and training were brought to the groups as a result of the eclectic background of the facilitators. The credibility and expertise provided by the pairing of these facilitator types allowed for an extremely positive and effective group process to evolve.

In addition to the formation of support groups for disabled youth, the Employability Support Network accomplished the following overall program goals:

1. Created an advisory council that identified priorities, made community contacts, and advised staff.

2. Adapted and developed materials and curricula suited to the training needs of youth and facilitators.

3. Trained facilitators to establish and conduct support groups.

4. Established group network and provided technical assistance to facilitators.

5. Conducted a series of workshops in employability skills for youth.

6. Provided technical assistance and disseminated information to schools, agencies, and interested persons.

CHAPTER CONTENTS:

Contents of the handbook are divided into three main sections: Planning, Implementation, and Bibliography. Because readers may wish to make use of specific portions of the handbook, a brief outline of the chapter contents is provided below.

SECTION ONE: PLANNING

CHAPTER 1

RATIONALE: WHY SET UP A PROGRAM?

Discusses what support groups do and why a program may be needed in your community.

CHAPTER 2

RESOURCES: WHAT IS NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH A SUPPORT GROUP?

Details what resources are necessary and which are nice to have but expensive. Presents three examples of budgets.

CHAPTER 3

TARGET POPULATION: WHOM SHOULD THE GROUP SERVE?

Poses questions to consider when choosing the target group.

CHAPTER 4

FACILITATORS: HOW TO RECRUIT, TRAIN, AND SUPERVISE

Describes how success or failure of the support group depends on the performance of the facilitators. Explores where to find facilitators, what skills they should have, training they may need, and how to supervise their performance in the group.

SECTION TWO: IMPLEMENTATION

CHAPTER 5

COLLABORATION: HOW TO INTERACT WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND AGENCIES

Explains why facilitators need to work closely with schools, teachers and parents. Outlines what schools and agencies may have to give to the group and what you may have to offer.

CHAPTER 6

RECRUITMENT: WHERE TO FIND YOUTH

Offers ideas on why recruitment can be time-consuming and frustrating. Gives ideas about where to locate youth with disabilities and how to get them to come to a support group that is designed to meet their needs.

CHAPTER 7

TRANSPORTATION: HOW TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS

Indicates why transportation can be one of the major barriers to participation in support groups. Discusses various options in solving the dilemma and encourages creativity as the ultimate solution.

CHAPTER 8

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION: HOW TO GET THE GROUP UP AND RUNNING

Focuses on the detailed process of setting up the support group. Discusses what to do before the first group and what to do at the first meeting.

CHAPTER 9

INTEREST AND ATTENDANCE: HOW CAN THEY BE MAINTAINED?

Analyzes how to keep the support group going. Discusses basic group structure, group activities, and group problems.

CHAPTER 10

ISSUES AND HEADACHES: HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

Considers a few of the major problems of planning and implementing support groups and offers creative solutions.

CHAPTER 11

TERMINATION: HOW TO END A SUPPORT GROUP

Deals with the issue of disbanding the group and closure.

CHAPTER 12

EVALUATION: WHO NEEDS TO KNOW HOW THE GROUP IS DOING?

Discusses why students, facilitators, parents, teachers, and administrators need to know whether the group is meeting its goals. Describes informal and formal methods of evaluation.

SECTION ONE: PLANNING

CHAPTER 1

RATIONALE: WHY SET UP A PROGRAM?

As a result of the advocacy efforts of many individuals, youth with disabilities are provided a myriad of services through federal and state laws and programs. Examples of these services are the work experience programs and transition teams that schools and school districts have implemented to facilitate transition out of high school. These efforts have been initiated because, historically, once disabled students leave the schools, they encounter a multitude of problems. Many don't obtain jobs and therefore sit idle at home, get into trouble with the law, lose skills, maintain few friendships, and become isolated from their community.

The transition from high school to adult life is not an easy one for anyone. Although all youth have some difficulties adjusting during this period, most survive this period with help from role models and peers. Role models give information, answer questions, and allow students to start thinking, "If they can succeed, I can, too". Through peer support, youth get ideas from one another, problem solve together, and support one another in their struggles.

Students with disabilities often need more assistance during this difficult transition period. In the high school setting, they are sometimes segregated in classes and other times are integrated with peers in mainstreamed classes. Segregated or integrated, youth with disabilities are still youth, and they face the same challenges and struggles that their peers face. They fight for a sense of independence while they resist their dependence on school and family. They struggle to form relationships with friends, parents, teachers, and the opposite sex. Issues such as jobs, college, lifestyle, and the future require many decisions. Youth must also fight to determine how their abilities relate to their disabilities; they must figure out what they can do, how they can do it, and what happens if they do it.

Support groups for youth with disabilities provide settings where many of the unique needs of these youth may be addressed. The list which follows contains some of the needs which may be effectively addressed in a support group. While it is true that youth with disabilities may need extensive support services, remember that the needs listed below are indeed applicable to <u>all</u> young people.

NEEDS OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES THAT MAY BE MET IN SUPPORT GROUPS:

1. To have positive role models.

2. To discover how their disabilities affect them, how to deal with societal attitudes, and how to accept themselves as they are.

3. To identify and accentuate the positive.

4. To learn independent living skills and survival skills.

5. To contemplate and dream about the future as an adult, to plan for it, and to begin to act on it.

6. To learn about the laws, rights, and services that affect them so that they can advocate for themselves.

7. To share and solve problems with others who have similar goals.

8. To begin the building of their own support network.

9. To have work experience that proves their competency and demonstrates to employers their ability to work productively.

10. To make friends and learn social skills.

When beginning to establish a support group for youth with disabilities in your community, it is important to be able to explain to others the rationale for support groups and why their formation is being initiated. Talking with community leaders, school officials, and parents will give information about which group of individuals may have the greatest need or which organization may be the best choice to sponsor a support group network. Consider which of the programs currently serving youth with disabilities could add a support group - high schools, community colleges, colleges, social service agencies, or advocacy organizations.

In supporting the concept of a support group, it may be necessary to respond to the question, "What exactly is a support group?" The answer is that support groups are unique entities designed by group participants to meet their individual needs. The form and shape that the support group takes depends on its group members and facilitators. Several options for support group structure are as follows: "rap sessions," whose members talk about and solve personal problems; skill building groups, whose members decide what they want to learn, and facilitators and/or

members lead them through activities or discussions on those topics; and social groups, whose members get together to socialize and have fun. In general, the most successful groups are a combination of these formats.

Although each support group is unique, support groups do share common bonds. The following list indicates some of the attributes that support groups share:

1. A support group gets together at an appointed time on a regular basis for a specified period of time.

2. Each member of a support group shares and takes responsibility for the group.

3. Members talk about themselves, their concerns, experiences, successes, and problems.

4. Members listen to each other attentively, ask questions, and show caring.

5. Members are encouraged to act in ways to help others feel they have the courage to deal with their concerns, comfort them in their discouragements, point out their strengths, assets, and successes, urge them to feel good about themselves and to have realistic and hopeful attitudes.

6. Members reassure each other that they are worthwhile individuals.

7. Members let each other know that they are not alone, that they all understand and share many experiences.

8. Members facilitate constructive problem-solving techniques and focus on specific strategies and skills necessary to solve those problems.

It is vital to remember that a support group is not formal therapy, and it does not focus on the in-depth needs or concerns of group members. The facilitators should assess the extent of a group member's problem and, when necessary, make a referral to a more appropriate form of assistance.

CHAPTER 2

RESOURCES: WHAT IS NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH A SUPPORT GROUP?

In planning a support group, one of the first issues to surface is the question of resources. Who will sponsor the support group? Where will the support group meet? Who will facilitate the support group? Will they get paid? By whom and how much? Which youth will be recruited for the support group? What materials will be needed?

Available resources mean more than just money; resources also include the energy of volunteers and group members and the donation of in-kind support. A lot of money is not necessary in the formation of a support group. The minimal resources necessary to establish a support group are the following:

1. Two skilled and committed facilitators.
2. Four to ten participants.
3. A consistently available meeting place.
4. A little money for materials and supplies.

Additional resources that require a larger funding base but that are helpful in establishing a support group are paid facilitators, transportation, training, instructional materials, guest speakers, and other materials and supplies such as snacks.

Facilitators for support groups may be either paid or volunteer. The Employability Support Network contracted with facilitators for their time. In order to secure the most qualified individuals, the project paid each facilitator for twelve hours per month at $10 per hour. The twelve hours included not only the weekly support meeting of about one and a half hours, but also preparation and planning time and a two-hour monthly facilitators' meeting. The project administrative staff served as supervisors and evaluators of the facilitators' work performance.

Some groups have used volunteer facilitators effectively. Volunteers must be very committed to the group and willing and able to give their time and energy on a weekly basis. Chapter 4 of this manual goes into more depth regarding the recruitment, training, and supervision of facilitators.

	IDEAL	NEXT-TO-IDEAL	BARE BONES
FACILITATORS	1,920 (2@$10hr,12hrs/ mox8mos)	1,120 (2@$7hr,10hrs/ mox8mos)	200 (volunteer expenses)
TRANSPORTATION	300-2,000 (bus tickets, mileage,taxi)	200 (emergency use)	100 (emergency use)
MEETING SPACE (In-Kind)	-0-	-0-	-0-
MATERIALS & SUPPLIES	200	100	100
GUEST SPEAKERS	100	-0-	-0-
TOTAL	$2,322 - $4,220	$1,420	$400

The question of where to secure funding or resources for support groups is a vital one. There are many books written on how and where to obtain money for projects such as support groups (see Bibliography). Grants are available from governments, foundations, agencies, corporations, churches, and individuals. Although resources are limited, money is available from your community if the knowledge of where to look and how to ask is utilized.

Logical sponsoring agencies are schools. Schools may provide resources that support the group by making it an after-school activity and providing a staff person as a facilitator, transportation, and/or a meeting space. The school district may be able to integrate the support into its transition program for disabled youth (see Chapter 5).

Charging youth a nominal fee to attend is another way to obtain some money to support the group. This procedure may be initially difficult because youth usually do not have money, and parents will have to pay. Charging the youth may be a disincentive and impact attendance negatively. Conversely, often charging even a nominal fee provides an incentive to attend.

CHAPTER 3

TARGETING A POPULATION: WHO SHOULD THE GROUP SERVE?

The support group model is flexible and need not be limited to the population served by the Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth. In addition to focusing on individuals with sensory, mental, learning, or physical disabilities, support groups have been successfully initiated and maintained throughout a diverse cross-section of "special needs" populations, including the following: pregnant teens, teen fathers, young adults, men, women, adults in mid-life transition, the elderly, patients with cancer or other diseases, recovering alcoholics and/or drug abusers (and their families), and the gay and lesbian community. Any group of individuals who face a common obstacle, challenge, or problem can benefit from support group involvement and participation.

Local needs and specific concerns must be addressed when developing a target population (see Chapter 2). By learning what services already exist in a community, it is easier to identify issues and the group(s) of people that could benefit from the support group format. After several issues and potential participant populations have been defined, prioritize them in relation to need for the service of a support group. Consider the following factors in this prioritization process:

1. Will the support group format effectively deal with the issue/population at hand?

2. Is this issue/population currently receiving any services or problem solving attention? If so, what and from whom?

3. Will the support group create new options or duplicate existing efforts?

4. Are you able and willing to commit the necessary resources that will effectively address the needs of this issue/population?

5. Is there sufficient interest and community support for such a program? If not, can it be generated? How?

6. If you choose to initiate a support group, who in the community will be your allies? Who may oppose your efforts?

As a model program, the Employability Support Network served a broad range of youth with disabilities. This breadth of service was accomplished by focusing the membership of individual groups around a specific issue or disability, and recognition was given to the fact that different groups of people have different needs. For example, a group of physically disabled college students had vastly different needs from those of deaf high schoolers or those of "trainable mentally retarded" work-activity participants.

In summary, commonality of experience bonds a support group together; hence the scope of program should be narrow enough to ensure this commonality. Resist the desire to deal with every problem of every special needs population. Identify a specific population who could benefit from this type of participation in a support group, define a common need (with input from group members or spokespersons), and build the program to address these issues.

CHAPTER 4

FACILITATORS: HOW TO RECRUIT, TRAIN AND SUPERVISE

Group facilitators provide guidance and impetus for the support group process to evolve. They are ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the group. Their main role is to create and structure opportunities for participants to interact, share, grow, and resolve issues. Facilitators should endeavor not to establish a teacher-student relationship with group members nor should others look upon facilitators as the sole "leaders" of the group. Group facilitation relies on listening rather than leading, guiding energy rather than taking action, creating group power rather than feeding upon it, and optimizing active participation rather than creating passivity.

Recruiting group facilitators requires a thorough knowledge of community resources (see Chapters 2 and 5). The Employability Support Network has traditionally utilized facilitator pairs comprised of a disabled community member, who serves as a role model for the youth participants, and a professional service provider, who works as a teacher, counselor, case manager, or psychologist. It is suggested that facilitators possess strengths in some or all of the following areas:

1. Knowledge and experience in the area of employment of disabled people.

2. Successful employment or activity as a volunteer in the social service community.

3. Experience in educating, counseling, or otherwise working with youth.

4. Experience in working with or relating to people with disabilities.

5. Demonstration of ability to work under stress, be punctual and reliable, and work with co-workers and supervisors.

6. Demonstration of an awareness of the social-psychological needs of youth and people with disabilities.

7. Experience in facilitating groups or demonstration of an ability and willingness to learn facilitation skills.

8. Ability to attend training sessions for facilitators, attend monthly facilitator meetings, and conduct weekly support groups.

Creating a roster of group facilitators must be accomplished well before group sessions are projected to begin. Time must be allowed for the phases of facilitator recruitment, interviewing, selection, and training. These phases and concomitant activities may take up to three months to complete. The larger and more complex the support group netowrk, the more time will be required to complete these initial activities.

Where will potential facilitators be found? Professional service providers can be located and contacted through:

- Local school districts
- Group Homes
- Counseling agencies
- Churches
- Community colleges & universities
- Private and public agencies serving disabled persons
- Private therapists
- Parent organizations

Disabled community members can be located and contacted through:

- Private and public agencies serving disabled persons
- Occupational therapists
- Physical therapists
- Word of mouth
- Parent organizations
- Independent living centers
- Disabled student organizations (college)
- Local school districts

After commitment is secured from individuals wishing to become facilitators, the process of creating co-facilitator teams needs to occur. There are several reasons why two facilitators per group are preferable to one. Although co-facilitation takes extra planning and though misunderstandings do occur, co-facilitators are able to handle the support group much better than can a single facilitator. First, they can support each other. If one has a problem with a group member, the other can help deal with it. Second, co-facilitators are much better at seeing the group dynamics. No one can view and process everything that is currently happening in a group. During the group, one facilitator can observe the group while the other is listening to participants or leading discussion. Co-facilitators can debrief at the end of group to share their dual perceptions. Third, co-facilitators can model healthy behavior and can demonstrate effective role playing.

Pairing facilitators to form viable co-facilitation teams requires adequate information, good insight, and good luck. Much of the information and impressions that are utilized to match facilitators comes from the interview process and from references supplied by the facilitators. Look for qualities and

personalities that will complement each other and anticipate how these two people will work together. Those individuals with value systems, beliefs, and personalities that are diametrically opposed will have difficulty working smoothly as a team. Facilitators that are too similar in beliefs, values, and backgrounds will not be advantageous to the group process either. It is healthy to have a variety of strengths and approaches embodied in the facilitator pairing. The most important item in choosing co-facilitators is that they see each other as equals.

Co-facilitator pairs should include both a male and a female in order to allow easy discussion and role playing of gender issues. Participants of both sexes have a person with whom to identify. In the case where an all female or male group has been created, generally the facilitators should be of the same sex.

Once facilitators are paired, it is vital they get to know each other. Since they will be working together closely, they will need to be very open about their approaches to the group specifically and life in general. Personal philosophies, preferences, differences, and strengths and weaknesses must be identified before the group begins. If one facilitator likes a lot of structure and the other does not, a compromise must be worked out or another partner found. If one likes to do advance planning and the other enjoys spontaneity with the group process, conflict may occur. One may like silence; the other may be uncomfortable with it. The outcome of these discussions is that co-facilitators must develop their own set of roles and rules and recognize that their approaches may change and evolve over time.

Training that group facilitators receive will vary in type and extent depending on the experience and skill levels of the individuals being trained. The more experience individuals have had in group settings, group dynamics, facilitation, and with the population they are working with, the less training they will need. An assessment of facilitators' skills should be made before training decisions are made.

The manner in which the facilitators are trained will depend on the number and needs of the people hired. For example, the Employability Support Network, which trained ten to twenty new facilitators each year with a variety of skill levels, held a two- to three-day workshop once per year with a one-day follow-up workshop. A formal training workshop may not be needed, but time prior to the start of the support group should be allowed for co-facilitators to get to know each other and to gather and/or review materials, resources, and activity ideas.

As training decisions are made it may be useful to consider the areas in which the Employability Support Network facilitators received training. Some of these topics are listed below:

Community resources & programs	Group activities
Increasing self-concept	Vocational rehabilitation
Vocational skills	Recruitment strategies
Youth	Job readiness skills
Social skills	Laws
Role playing	Group problem solving

In addition, agendas from these training sessions are included at the end of this chapter (see Exhibits 1 and 2).

Group roles and norms are established during the first few meetings of the support group. It is useful for facilitators to begin the group in a structured manner with their roles strictly defined and duties assigned between them. At first, both facilitators and group members test the waters, so facilitators must be clear regarding their roles. As facilitators grow together and as the group gains more definition, facilitators may develop a more natural working style.

Time must be set aside after each meeting for the facilitators to debrief about the group, to decide the next meeting's agenda, and to examine their relationship. Facilitators should talk about issues and problems that came up in the meeting, specific concerns over individual members or group process, and what worked and did not work and why. A good way of informally debriefing is to go out for refreshments and socialization afterwards.

Supervising group facilitators, group participants, and the group process is of vital importance to project staff, funders, parents, and school personnel. Supervision will also help the group run more smoothly and verify that goals and objectives are being accomplished. Who is in charge of supervision will depend on where the support group is held and who is sponsoring it (see Chapter 12).

Facilitators need a lot of support during the first month or two that the group is meeting. During this time, facilitators are adjusting the focus of that particular group, recruiting additional participants, and planning and leading the initial meetings. In addition, they are learning to work together - getting to know each other's styles, strengths, and weaknesses. They may feel uncertain about their skills at group facilitation and unsure about which group activities are most appropriate. Providing specific outlines to help them make group plans and assisting their process of learning how to work together effectively may be very helpful.

The supervisor will ask the facilitator(s), either individually or together, what they are doing in the group and how it is proceeding overall. Problem-solving and idea-sharing will be major tasks during this time. If communication and trust are issues between the facilitators, they need to be addressed. The supervisor who senses a potential problem must be willing to intervene and, if necessary, to employ a final strategy of reassigning the facilitators to new partners.

A regularly scheduled monthly meeting is a good way of keeping in touch. The supervisor and facilitators should meet to talk about group activities, problems, issues, successes, and other pertinent matters. Phone calls between these meetings to each facilitator may be needed at first.

In summary, the recruiting, training, and supervision of facilitators is a large job. However, the team of facilitators is directly responsible for the successful outcome of the support group. The time and energy spent with facilitators is time and energy well used.

Exhibit 1

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK OF DISABLED YOUTH
Child Development and Rehabilitation Center

TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR FACILITATORS
AGENDA

Day 1

8:00am	Arrival and Coffee
8:30am	Introductions "Getting To Know You" (Pairing up facilitators) Resource Table
9:45am	BREAK
10:00am	Disability Awareness
11:30am	Helping Youth Understand Their Disability/Helping Others to Understand
12:00	LUNCH
1:00pm	Small Groups (Choose one to attend) 1. Movie: "Help Wanted: Lynn Thompson's Story" Barriers & incentives to work for people with disabilities 2. Job Training and Partnership Act
2:00pm	Small Groups (Choose one to attend) 1. Job Readiness Skills & How to Prepare Youth 2. Vocational Rehabilitation Division: How to get in, use the service, and get out.
3:00pm	BREAK
3:15pm	Past Facilitators: Learning from Their Experiences (Panel discussion)
4:30pm	Wrap-Up and Evaluation

Day 2

8:00am	Arrival and Coffee
8:30am	Facilitator's Guide to Support Group Interaction
12:00	LUNCH and movies
1:00pm	Facilitator's Guide (continued)
2:00pm	BREAK
2:30pm	Grab Bag of Activities
3:15pm	Network: Share Resources and Ideas
4:00pm	Discussion and Assignment for "Get Together"

Day 3

4:00pm	Increasing Self-Concept of Individuals with Disabilities
5:00pm	Sharing, Planning and the Nitty-Gritty of Support Groups

Exhibit 2

FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOP FOR FACILITATORS
AGENDA

8:45am	Coffee and doughnuts
9:00am	Conversation Training Strategies
10:15am	BREAK
10:30am	Being More Effective as a Facilitator: Problem-Solving and Skill-Building
12:00	LUNCH
1:00pm	Effective Facilitation (continued)
3:30pm	Quick Wrap-Up (News items and evaluation)
3:45pm	Closing

SECTION TWO: IMPLEMENTATION

CHAPTER 5

COLLABORATION: HOW TO INTERACT WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND AGENCIES

The involvement of school districts and agencies that serve the target population is integral to the success of support groups. They need to be involved at the outset to provide feedback regarding existing service programs, student/client needs, available facilities and resources, and possible levels of cooperation regarding referrals, staff participation, and funding.

The value of support group interaction must be made clear to schools and agencies if a beneficial and cooperative arrangement is to exist. See Exhibits 3 and 4 for examples of this type of written communication. Support group organizers must indicate to schools and agencies specific points of clarification:

1. The positive effect group participation will have on the students/clients.

2. How the support group model differs from existing educational or therapeutic programs.

3. How the school or agency will benefit from participating in the proposed project.

4. What, if any, resources will be required from the district or agency.

5. The enhancement of the community that will result from the group's presence.

Identifying a contact person in each school district or agency is vitally important during the initial discussion phase as well as once an agreement is made for project sponsorship. The contact person should be able to make decisions regarding policies and commitment or be closely involved with those who can. In a school district, the director of special education, the superintendent, school principals, or program coordinators are good choices as contacts. In a service agency, the executive director or that person's main assistant is an appropriate contact. When commitment is secured from key administrative personnel, a greater degree of cooperation, assistance, and firm decision-making is usually ensured.

Once initial cooperation is secured and as details of the agreement are being defined, the district/agency can function as a source of information and feedback in the following areas:

1. EXISTING SERVICE PROGRAMS. What are schools, community clubs, local, county, state, and private agencies doing in the community to serve youth with disabilities? Will a support group network duplicate services or bring a new component of education and experience to the participants? How, if at all, will support groups interface with existing special education curricula, vocational education and community living programs, structured recreational opportunities, and counseling programs? Can the support group concept be used as an additional component to these ongoing programs? It may be worthwhile to consider instituting the support group as an after-school "club" or extra-curricular activity.

2. STAFF PARTICIPATION AND COOPERATION. Will the district/agency donate staff time for planning, implementing, facilitating, and/or evaluating a support group network? If so, specify roles, duties, and amount of time per week or month.

3. MEETING FACILITIES. Will the district/agency donate space and materials for the support group meetings?

4. YOUTH REFERRALS. How can support group staff gain access to names, addresses, and phone numbers of potential youth participants? Should the district/agency make initial youth contacts or will a list of appropriate potential participants be turned over to support group staff? Cooperatively brainstorm other ideas regarding locating and contacting potential support group members (see Chapter 6).

5. FUNDING SOURCES. Are funds available from the district/agency to assist in the planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of a support group network? Is the district/agency aware of any alternative funding sources that may be appropriate for application, such as foundations, fraternal organizations, hospital gift funds, Jaycees, churches or other agencies? Will the district/agency assist in making such an application?

At the conclusion of the negotiation phase, specify in writing at what level the district or agency will be involved. Indicate how the proposed support group network will interface with the district/agency. It is possible for the district/agency to function in a variety of roles: as a consulting associate, giving no administrative or budgetary assistance; as a cooperative sponsor, sharing responsibility for the program's direction and scope with support group staff or another agency; as an exclusive program sponsor, providing all of the network's funding, staff, and administration.

Ongoing communication with cooperating entities is vital. A regularly scheduled meeting or telephone call should be arranged to keep all parties informed of progress, problems, needs, and expectations. Formal progress notes or a final report may be required as part of the agreed upon evaluation process (see Chapter 12).

Exhibit 3

September 10, 1984

Dear School Administrator:

CDRC staff have authored and received federal funding for a program entitled Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth. The project will focus on developing skills necessary to seek, acquire and maintain employment for youth, aged 16-21 who are physically, mentally or emotionally disabled.

The core of this three year program, funded through the U.S. Department of Education, will consist of ten support groups, to begin in January 1985, each led by two co-facilitators. Facilitator pairs will include a disabled adult and a staff member from a professional service agency or training facility.

The Employability Support Network will meet the needs of disabled youth in the tri-county area who are approaching or involved in the transition between school and work. This change is always difficult, but it is extremely so for those with a disability. This program will assist these young people in making a more successful and directed transition.

Other integral aspects of the program include:

- Creation of an advisory committee made up of professionals, parents, disabled adults, employers and support group participants.
- Facilitator training in the form of workshops to be held in early December and ongoing feedback and assistance throughout the life of the program.
- Adapted curricula and workshops for youth participants.
- Dissemination of useful information to particpating youth, agencies and school districts.

Project staff are now in the process of recruiting professional service providers, i.e., administrators, counselors, teachers and aides to serve as paid facilitators for youth support groups. We are also preparing a list of prospective youth participants. Please forward the names of students you feel might be appropriate for this program. Also, if you or other qualified staff under your director would be interested in serving as a group facilitator, or if you would like more information on the project, please call Robin Stephens, Project Director, or me at the number listed below.

Sincerely,

Pat Haley, M.S.
Project Coordinator
Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth
279-7522

Enclosures

Exhibit 4

THE OREGON
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY
CRIPPLED CHILDREN'S DIVISION
Child Development & Rehabilitation Center, P.O. Box 574, Portland, OR 97207
Crippled Children's Services University Affiliated Program

December 15, 1986

John Doe, Coordinator
Vocational Education
School District 1A
Anytown, Oregon 97000

Dear John:

The Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth, a federally funded grant program, is in its third and final project year. It is our intention to locate further funding for portions of this project so that teens with disabilities will continue to receive services in the support group format.

Since you have been involved with our staff on several levels of administering and implementing this project, we would like to work with you in exploring any avenues and options within the School District that might lead to a continuation of support group network services.

As you know, the Employability Support Network has worked with several School District staff members and served approximately 60 youths in the Public Schools over the last three years focusing on issues of employability, self-concept, communication skills and transitional questions. We feel it has been a very productive, innovative intervention in the lives of the participants. Parents and teachers of our participants tend to agree. Ninety-two percent of parents surveyed and 86% of teachers surveyed indicate that support group involvement had a positive influence on the youth. These respondents also stated overwhelmingly (parents: 77%; teachers: 68%) that youth participants were more interested in seeking employment as a result of support group participation.

The youth participants have given us positive feedback as well. Seventy-five percent of the youth responding to a survey said they "learned a lot" in their support group. Ninety-three percent reported they now considered group members a friends, and 74% indicated they "enjoyed the group a lot." Participants were able to list 17 different topic area relating to employability, self-esteem and communication skills that they learned about during their support group involvement.

We have generally had the support groups meet weekly after school or in the evening for one-and-a-half to two hours. Groups usually have 6 to 10 participants. If the District were to become involved, it would be very workable and appropriate to have groups meet during school time as part of special education class, or even better, as an after-school "club" or extra-curricular activity. Another feasible format might be found in coupling the support group idea to existing school-sponsored recreation, community

Schools:
Schools of Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing
Clinical Facilities:
University Hospital
Doernbecher Memorial Hospital for Children
Crippled Children's Division
Outpatient Clinics
Special Research Division:
Institute for Advanced Biomedical Research

living, or vocational programs. Support group participation could be offered for credit as an elective for high school age youths with disabilities.

The ideas tendered above serve only to illustrate that the concept and implementation of a support group network can be quite flexible to fit a variety of administrative and curricular needs. We are very willing to be involved in any process that would further adapt and fine-tune the support group concept to meet your district's needs.

Resources necessary to initiate and maintain such a group include (1) A comfortable, consistent meeting place that serves as a safe base of operations; (2) Two Facilitators. This project's major innovative feature is the use of adults with disabilities working with professional service providers (teachers, counselors, etc.) in a co-facilitation model. In some groups, both of the facilitators have been disabled. Our staff feels very strongly that at least one facilitator be an adult with a disability to promote and portray a positive role model; (3) Youth Participants. The project has served a broad range of youth, including EMR, TMR, orthopedically/physically disabled, deaf, learning disabled and youth with multiple disabilities; (4) Materials. Most would be available within a school setting; (5) Transportation to and/or from group meetings, field trips, etc.

Project costs to implement a support group vary depending on how, when and where the group is held. For 1 group, serving 6-10 youths, examples of necessary funding include:

	Item	Amount
1.	Meeting Place	
	a) School facility	-0-
	b) Donated facility	-0-
2.	Two Facilitators (8-month commitment, 12 hours per month)	
	Options	
	a. Both not currently employed by District, @ $10/hr	$1,920
	b. One not currently employed by District, @ $10/hr	$ 960
	c. One current District employee	Per collective bargaining agreement
3.	Youth Participants	-0-
4.	Materials (speakers, field trips, consumables, books, etc., depending on group needs)	$50-$500
5.	Transportation	Per contracted carrier

Please feel free to contact project staff if any further information or justification is needed. Thank you for your support and your efforts to continue the tenets and goals of this project.

Sincerely,

Pat Haley, M.S.
Project Coordinator
Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth
279-7522

CHAPTER 6

RECRUITMENT: WHERE TO FIND YOUTH

Once the planning stage is completed and a target population has been identified for a support group (see Chapters 1 and 3), the task of youth recruitment will be at hand. During the planning stage, project sponsors will be in contact with groups, agencies, and schools that can be major referral sources because they have incidental or formal service relationships with the population targeted for inclusion. However, some excellent sources are reluctant to share names of possible participants for several reasons: 1) issues of confidentiality; 2) the feeling of not wanting to help "the competition"; 3) the feeling that "It's not my job" or "I'm not allowed to do that"; and 4) an unclear perception of the proposed support group's goals and direction. It is very important to educate potential referral sources regarding the value of the support group concept, how it will be implemented, and what role it will serve in the community.

AGENCY & INDIVIDUAL REFERRAL SOURCES: As the recruitment process begins, it will be helpful to contact the following potential sources. Remember that the list is not exhaustive.

- Local school districts
- Private agencies
- Hospitals and clinics
- Churches
- Service clubs
- Private schools
- Community colleges & Universities
- Group Homes
- Local, county, state agencies
- Parent advocacy &/or support groups
- Private therapists
- Physicians
- Public park departments
- Student organizations
- Work activity centers
- Businesses with disabled workers

A sample referral form is included at the end of this chapter (Exhibit 5).

Marketing the support group network can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The methods listed below are suggested starting points:

DIRECT CONTACT of the potential referral sources listed above is a good start. Identify contact persons and provide them with literature or a written description of the program as well as a written summary of their possible involvement with the program.

FLYERS, PAMPHLETS, and LITERATURE can be mailed and posted in selected places in the community to create interest and inform potential participants and referral sources of the program's existence. See Exhibit 6 for the flyer the Employability Support Network used.

PRESENTATIONS at meetings of agencies, clubs, parent groups, hospital boards, special educators, community action groups, and school boards allow listeners to ask questions and learn how support groups work. Audience feedback helps project sponsors and organizers to fine-tune the focus of the proposed project. Specifically request names of potential group participants and ask if a personal follow-up may be made.

PUBLICITY in the form of press releases and public service announcements in local papers, on the radio, and on public access television stations can be effective. A simple example of an announcement is as follows:

> GROUPS NOW FORMING:
>
> Support groups for (target population) are being formed in the (local community) area. Groups will focus on issues of (identified need) and (secondary issue). Contact _____ at _____ for more information.

Following up on initial contacts with potential referral sources is a must. Individuals (and agencies, clubs, groups, and school districts) need time to assimilate information and learn more about the proposed project from their own sources before they will automatically extend a helping hand in the form of youth referrals. Keep in touch with identified contact persons. If little or no response is given to the request for referrals, ask who else in the administrative framework would be an appropriate contact. Be persistent and well-intentioned with your follow-up efforts.

SELF-REFERRAL: Formal referral sources are not always necessary. Some youth can be contacted without having to be referred by an agency, school, or doctor. If the targeted population is one that potential participants may "self-refer" themselves (learning disabled, deaf, physically disabled, blind, and/or epilepsy), be sure to spread news of the project in locations that are frequented by the youth you hope to serve. Examples of such locations include the following:

- Libraries
- Schools/classes
- School papers
- Movie theaters
- Convenience stores
- Public access television
- YMCA/YWCA
- Video parlors
- Church groups
- Association of Retarded Citizens
- Pizza parlors
- Fast food restaurants
- Bowling alleys
- Shopping malls
- Service agencies

Remember that WORD OF MOUTH is possibly the greatest ally a program can have!

Once a list of potential participants is developed, establishing contact with them and their families is the next step. In a larger program where several facilitator pairs are to be utilized, the youth referral list can be screened by program administrative staff and divided up into tentative groups for the facilitators to contact. In a smaller project, where only one or two groups are proposed, one or two people, either administrative staff or facilitators, can make the initial youth contacts. Procedural issues and protocol regarding the recruitment of group members should be well thought out and clarified by program administrative staff before actual contacts are made. The dissemination of standardized, consistent information ensures that youth, their families, and the community receive the same message.

Contacting youth and their families requires an informed, understanding approach from staff. This contact may or may not be the first time the family and/or youth has heard of the project or the concept of support groups. They will need the following information:

1. What the program is and how it may serve them.

2. Who is in charge and who they can have further contact with.

3. How this program interfaces with existing services provided by schools, parks, and agencies.

4. Who referred this youth to the program and why.

5. What is expected of the potential participant and/or family.

6. Information regarding time and location of proposed group meetings, transportation and format.

Parent or youth - who should the program staff talk to first? If at all possible, contact the potential group participant first; then review the conversation with the parent/guardian. The target population in the Employability Support Network was young adults, ages 16-21. Many in this age group resented being treated like children and felt they could make appropriate decisions regarding their interest in this type of personal involvement, rather than having to "get permission" from parents or to be required to attend a group they were not interested in. If the potential participants are mentally disabled or are in some other way unable to understand the concepts being described, it is more appropriate to discuss the support group proposal first with parents or guardians.

"Selling" the concept and program successfully to potential participants and their families results in securing

commitments of participant involvement. Know ahead of time what points to stress and what key needs to address, but remain flexible to respond to the youth's or family's questions and opinions. Keep in mind the position of the person you are talking to and gear your discussion to facilitate that person's understanding of the program. When dealing with youth, think about what would attract a young adult's interest. Discuss potential activities, companionship, and fun. Ask for feedback and be prepared to employ strategies that will get youth out of the "I don't know" - "yes" - "no" response mode. Also, be ready to respond to parents who want to bounce the entire responsibility for the youth's involvement and transportation back to the facilitator.

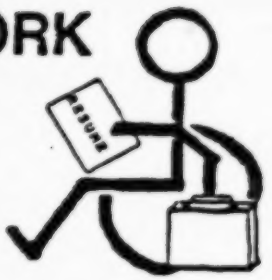
There are many topics to mention that will pique interest and stimulate discussion about the group. The more the participant and her/his family knows about the possibilities and opportunities available through the support group, the more interested they will be. Topics to work into a recruitment discussion include the following:

- Communication skills
- Independence
- Peer acceptance
- Friendship
- Transportation
- Decision-making
- Having fun
- Relationships with opposite sex
- Exploring job/work situations
- Disability awareness
- Legal rights
- Practice dealing with & explaining their disabilities
- Feeling of self-worth

Persistence is necessary to gain trust and commitments. It is not uncommon after the initial contact with a youth or family to receive a negative or unclear response. Leave the option open for another contact, send or leave a pamphlet or literature, and then recontact in a few days. Don't give up. Recruiting is hard work.

Exhibit 5

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK OF DISABLED YOUTH



YOUTH REFERRALS

Referral Source_____ Agency/School_____

Address_____ Phone #_____

Name_____ Age____ Disability_____

Address_____ Phone #_____

Parent's Name_____ Skill Level/Sch. Program_____

In School?_____ Graduating When?_____ College?_____ Out of School?_____

Name_____ Age____ Disability_____

Address_____ Phone #_____

Parent's Name_____ Skill Level/Sch. Program_____

In School?_____ Graduating When?_____ College?_____ Out of School?_____

Name_____ Age____ Disability_____

Address_____ Phone #_____

Parent's Name_____ Skill Level/Sch. Program_____

In School?_____ Graduating When?_____ College?_____ Out of School?_____

Name_____ Age____ Disability_____

Address_____ Phone #_____

Parent's Name_____ Skill Level/Sch. Program_____

In School?_____ Graduating When?_____ College?_____ Out of School?_____

Please make sure the young people and their families know they have been referred to this program. Encourage prospective participants and their families to call for further information.

Robin Stephens, Director
Pat Haley, Coordinator
OHSU/CDRC
P.O. Box 574
Portland, Oregon 97207

(503) 225-8313

...WE NEED...

GROUP MEMBERS

-to become involved with support groups, and gain increased confidence in the ability to find a JOB/CAREER.

-acquire reusable life skills, heightened self-esteem, self-assertion skills, communication skills, stress management techniques, and self-directed JOB SEARCH methods.

FACILITATORS

-to establish and lead support groups by using counseling strategies and instructional techniques.

-to assist group members in realizing their potential and abilities to seek, acquire and maintain EMPLOYMENT.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

-to transport or travel with youth needing assistance to and from support group meetings--helping them become good candidates for TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

-to guide and support the Employability Support Network, solve problems, and be involved with the planning and implementation of the program.

INTERESTED? READ ON!

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK IS GROWING...

1984-1985

Year One: Ten groups began meeting in the Portland area. More than 60 youth were served and 20 facilitators were trained.

1985-1986

Year Two: Six support groups will begin September of '85 and six more will begin January '86. A STATEWIDE network, with support groups beginning in communities around Oregon is forming. Seventy-two youth will be served.

Two handbooks about the Employability Support Network will be drafted, dealing with replication procedures and support group activities.

1986-1987

Year Three: Twelve groups will continue with support from their local communities. Facilitators will prepare groups to continue beyond the life of the grant.

The two handbooks will be published.

THE GOAL OF THE EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK IS TO ESTABLISH SUPPORT GROUPS, FACILITATED BY ROLE MODELS, OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. GROUPS FOCUS ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS, SELF-CONCEPT, COMMUNICATION SKILLS, AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS.

PLEASE JOIN US!

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK OF DISABLED YOUTH

INVITES YOU TO PARTICIPATE

IN A SUPPORT GROUP NETWORK.....

Exhibit 6

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK SUPPORT GROUPS...

*Are vehicles for development and discussion of:

-job readiness
-independent living skills
-transportation
-self-esteem
-communication skills
-interpersonal/social relations

*Meet weekly for 1½ to 2 hours.

*Are unique to meet the needs of group members.

*Include youth, ages 16-21, (flexible) who have mild to severe disabilities: physical, mental, learning, and emotional.

*Use role models who are disabled as positive sources of support and understanding.

*Have two paid facilitators... one who has a disability and one who is a community service provider. Both attend a training workshop.

*Empower youth to be their own person, make decisions, find their abilities and potentials, and be a self-advocate.

*Are composed of at least six youth who act as a source of encouragement and support to one another and learn from each other.

GROUP MEMBERS TELL US...

- I learned how to work together with others in a group.
- I learned how to write a resume.
- I learned how to act on a job interview and how to ask questions.
- I learned how to use buses.
- I made new friends who like me.

GROUP FACILITATORS TELL US...

- I improved my counseling and facilitation techniques.
- I enjoyed working with these youths and learned a lot from them.
- I learned about groups and group problem solving.
- The support network really works ...I don't lead, the group does the work!

PARENTS AND TEACHERS TELL US...

- Because Jerry has few opportunities to socialize out of school with peers he especially anticipates support group meetings.
- Lori shows increased awareness about her limitations and is more open to alternatives as a result of your program.
- Janet's whole attitude has changed. She is better prepared to take on the world!

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK...

IS HOUSED AT THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND REHABILITATION CENTER ---CDRC, OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY, PORTLAND, OREGON

IS SUPPORTED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES, GRANT NO. G00845007 AND THE UNIVERSITY AFFILIATED PROGRAM, CRIPPLED CHILDREN'S DIVISION, OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

ROBIN STEPHENS, PROJECT DIRECTOR
PAT HALEY, PROJECT COORDINATOR
DIANE VIEHE, ADMINISTRATIVE ASS'T.
CDRC/OHSU; P. O. BOX 574
PORTLAND, OREGON 97207
(503) 225-8313

Exhibit 7

January 1985

Dear Parents:

I am currently a co-facilitator with the EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK OF DISABLED YOUTH serving young people (approximately ages 16 to 21) in the tri-county area. I felt that the project may benefit _____.

The Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth is a three-year, federally-funded program, directed and administered by staff of the Child Development and Rehabilitation Center of the Oregon Health Sciences University. Its focus is to upgrade the employability skills of youth participants through support group instruction and interaction. Each of the ten groups will be led by a pair of trained facilitators. One facilitator will be a professional service provider from the community and the other will be a disabled adult who has successfully made the transition from school to the world of work.

IMPORTANT "NEED TO KNOW" ITEMS

- Participation in groups is free of charge.

- Selection of youth participants will be determined based on need, disability and geographic location.

- The groups will meet at times and places convenient for participants and facilitators (as yet to be arranged).

- Staff and facilitators will work on arranging transportation for participants to and from groups. Options include car pools, public transportation, LIFT service, etc. (a very small amount of money is available for extreme cases of need.)

Throughout the course of the groups, some of the many topics that will be addressed include:

Interviewing, telephone skills, appropriate employment attitude and behavior, keeping a job, communication/listening skills, civil rights, transportation, self-concept...and many more, depending on the needs and interests of the group.

I will be contacting you shortly to discuss the possibility of including your son or daughter in our program.

Sincerely,

Kitty Purser

CHAPTER 7

TRANSPORTATION: HOW TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS

For many group participants, transportation is a major barrier to involvement in a support group. Many youth with disabilities cannot drive and are unable or not taught to use local public transportation. Some communities have no public transit available. Parents are sometimes unable or unwilling to take the student to where the support group meets. Therefore, one of the initial struggles of beginning a group will be finding ways to transport everyone to and from the group.

The suggestions and solutions to the transportation "problem" that follow come from constant analysis of the situations encountered by the Employability Support Network staff. The question of transportation will continue to be a major issue in the lives of individuals with disabilities, but everyone who is interested in the support group will be able to attend as long as ingenuity and persistence are displayed.

The time and meeting place affect the individual's ability to get to and from the group. The most convenient times for youth to meet are after school or in the evening. If the support group meets at a location that is central to participants and which is near several public transportation stops that are frequent and reliable, it will be easier for participants to go to and from their weekly meetings. If the group meets at or near school or the workplace, project staff will need only to arrange transportation home for the participants. If a particular individual has a problem with transportation, have the group meet at her/his home if possible or at some place near his/her house.

Knowing all the transportation resources in your community is the first step to solving a transportation problem. Research should be undertaken to find all alternatives. In most communities, there is already available an extensive list of resources. Such a list may include school buses, activity buses, ambulance companies, taxi cabs, local public and private transportation services for people with disabilities and/or senior citizens, vans belonging to organizations such as group homes or park departments, and the public transportation system. Parents of group participants and volunteer drivers are other resources to be considered.

The next step is to brainstorm with all parties involved to find the ideal solution. It is important to realize that this process will take time as well as energy. Solutions are not created overnight and may change as the group continues. It is essential to take all concerns into consideration. Even if you

think you know the solution, the youth or parent may have different ideas. Parents may be afraid to allow their son or daughter to ride the bus, and youth may be fearful of trying to ride the bus. As the youth gains more confidence and as parents' attitudes change, some transportation solutions may become more feasible.

A list of possible alternative solutions to transportation problems follows. Any list is partial because community resources vary and creativity will ultimately solve the group's transportation problems.

LOCAL PUBLIC BUSES - If there is a public transportation system in your area, many participants will already be able to use it effectively. Make sure the group meets in a location that has reliable and frequent bus service (ideally more than one line) and that the bus stop is in a convenient location. Written directions and pictures may help some participants.

For those participants who do not know how to take a bus and/or need training and support, there are many options as long as both youth and parent are agreeable. Another group participant who is able to ride the bus can accompany the individual on the bus to the group. The group facilitator can also go with the individual until she/he is comfortable doing it alone. If the participant is in school, the teacher can be contacted and may be able to help with the training. The bus system can be a complicated matter for some individuals. Initial problems are to be expected and include participants getting lost, taking the wrong bus, or encountering other difficulties. Make sure that participants have telephone money and phone numbers of trusted adults, the meeting place, facilitators' homes, and their own home. Participants should have the bus route and destination written down so that if they are lost, they can show it to the bus driver or others.

SCHOOL/ACTIVITY BUS - In many areas school or activity buses can be used to transport students to and/or from the group. Schools are often happy to take the student as long as the destination is on or near a scheduled route. You may also want to investigate the use of a school district's money for other, more expensive alternative transportation methods because schools sometimes have monies available for individual student's needs. If the support group participation can become a requirement of the student's IEP (Individual Education Plan), the school may help with transportation.

PARENTAL CARPOOLS - Carpools are an excellent solution, especially if participants live fairly close together. One parent could drive participants to the group and another parent could drive from the group. If money is available, they could be reimbursed for mileage. Investigate liability laws; sometimes

payment in any form other than mileage means the driver is no longer a volunteer and the sponsor's liability increases. The Employability Support Network had each guardian sign a waiver to decrease the program's and volunteer's liability. See Exhibit 8.

Call parents of participants and evaluate their willingness to drive. Ask them when they can help out and make a schedule of those who are able. Remember to thank them; make sure they know they are a valuable part of the group's success even if they are not included in the group process.

DOOR-TO-DOOR PUBLIC/PRIVATE TRANSIT SYSTEMS - If your community has a door-to-door system for individuals who cannot ride the regular bus, try to use it. Although many times there are scheduling and reliability problems, it may be the best solution.

VOLUNTEER BUS COMPANION/DRIVERS - Finding a competent and reliable volunteer driver or bus rider is a good solution. As with parental carpool, make sure everyone is fully informed about what is taking place to avoid possible liability. This volunteer could either ride on the bus with one or two students to and from group meetings or have a route to drive to pick up and/or drop off students. Advertise in the local paper (many allow free "volunteer wanted" ads), prepare a job description, and screen carefully. Forms should be developed for the volunteers and parents to sign. The program's model volunteer monthly record form is included at the end of the chapter, see Exhibit 9.

FACILITATOR CARPOOL - A facilitator's willingness and ability to transport a few participants could help to solve the transportation problem. Usually, however, this is NOT a good solution because facilitators must use the time before and after the support group to get organized, debrief, and/or plan. It may be a temporary solution while other options are being firmed up. Be flexible, but do not burn the facilitator out!

TAXI CABS - Although this solution could be expensive, do not overlook this possibility. Taxi cab companies or drivers may donate or offer reduced rates for a ride or two a week.

ONE FINAL WORD: Transportation may be the largest problem in establishing your support group. If you know beforehand that it will be difficult and approach the problem with a positive, "we can do it" attitude, the process will be much less frustrating. Use the community resources you are knowledgeable about and also tap the group's problem-solving abilities.

Exhibit 8

VOLUNTEER DRIVER AGREEMENT

I, as a volunteer, understanding that I am an important member of a team delivering services to the group particpants of The Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth, located at the Child Development and Rehabilitation Center of the Oregon Health Sciences University, agree that:

If I use my private automobile in my volunteer duties, I declare that:

1) It will be of the private passenger type only and in good mechanical condition.

2) When driving in the Portland metropolitan area, the automobile will be equipped with operable seat belts. If driving outside the Portland metropolitan area, the automobile will be equipped in accordance with the requirements of OAR 572-11-060, a copy of which is attached.

3) I will continuously maintain liability insurance (which meets state requirements under the Financial Responsibility Law of Oregon) on my automobile and will not knowingly drive any uninsured vehicle in the course of my volunteer duties.

If I use an automobile registered to the State of Oregon in my volunteer duties, I agree that:

1) the automobile will be used exclusively for trips directly related to my volunteer assignment and not for personal purposes.

2) I represent The Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth while driving a State of Oregon vehicle and will represent the program responsibly.

When my assignment necessitates the use of either my private or a State of Oregon automobile, I agree that:

1) I will comply with the OHSU Vehicular Safety procedures, evidenced by completing the OHSU Statement of Compliance with OHSU Vehicular Safety Policy for Drivers of Private Vehicles Used for University Business (see attachment).

2) I have not been convicted within the past threet years of a major traffic offense as defined in ORS 484.010. I also hold a valid U.S. driver's license.

3) I must endeavor to operate the vehicle in accordance with the traffic laws of the State of Oregon.

4) I will ensure that all adults riding in the vehicle are using seat belts and that all children are secured with approved child safety restraints.

Date _____ Signature of Volunteer _____

INSTRUCTIONS: The volunteer will sign two forms. One is to be given to the volunteer, the other is to be retained in the volunteer's file.

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK OF DISABLED YOUTH

VOLUNTEER MONTHLY RECORD

Here is your record to be kept by you each month. Please carry it with you. Accuracy is important. We need this record to:

1. Know which participants are being served.
2. Ensure volunteer program continuation by documenting services and the effect of services.
3. Reimburse you for your out-of-pocket expenses or keep a record for your income tax deduction and to have a record of your valuable contribution.

Your Volunteer Services Supervisor must have this form for reports as well as your reimbursement. Please help the volunteer program by returning to the facilitator by the last day of each month you volunteer.

Exhibit 9

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SAMPLES

Social Security # _____
Month _____
Volunteer _____
Volunteer Address _____
_____

Do you wish reimbursement? ___Yes ___No

Date	Time Assignment Began	Client(s) Name & Town	Destination or Reason for Activity	Time Assignment Completed	Total Hours	Private Car Mileage	Meals & Other Expenses
1/22	6pm	John Smith	ESN support group mtng.	9pm	4	25	
3/31	4pm	Mary Jones	ESN support group mtng.	8pm	4	30	

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS:

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EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK OF DISABLED YOUTH

VOLUNTEER MONTHLY RECORD

Social Security # _____

Month _____

Volunteer _____

Volunteer Address _____

_____

Do you wish reimbursement? ____Yes ____No

Date	Time Assignment Began	Client(s) Name and Town	Destination or Reason for Activity	Time Assignment Completed	Total Hours	Private Car Mileage	Meals & Other Expenses
	50						51

CHAPTER 8

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION: HOW TO GET THE GROUP UP AND RUNNING

After the planning stage has been completed, participants recruited, and transportation issues resolved, focus should be directed on the initial implementation of the support group. The time prior to when the support group begins is a crucial period. Several key decisions and plans must be made in order to ensure a smooth start of the group. The first group that is set up will have the greatest challenges. Each group is also unique, and, no matter how organized the planning has been, there will be last- minute preparation and items that are forgotten.

GROUP COMPOSITION

After commitments are secured from participants, placing youth in appropriate groups must be accomplished. Placement variables that need to be considered include the following:

1. Disability: Do program sponsors feel a homogeneous group or a mixture of disabilities would be more effective?
2. Level of functioning: What are participants' cognitive, motor, and communication skills?
3. Age/maturity.
4. Geographic location: Where is the meeting site in relation to homes of participants? What are the transportation and safety issues (see Chapter 7)?
5. Group issues and interests.
6. Time of meetings.
7. Facilitator preference.

Remember that the group participants that have been recruited will determine, to a large extent, the atmosphere of the group.

MEETING PLACE

AMBIANCE: The meeting place is a key to the success of the support group because it sets the tone of the group. If it is too formal, people will not feel comfortable sharing with one another, and the group will not become cohesive. If the space is too school-like, an atmosphere can be created where the facilitator is the "leader." On the other hand, if the space is chaotic, it will be a distractive environment, and concentration will be limited.

PHYSICAL ROOM ARRANGEMENTS: An open room with a circle of chairs creates a very different space than a board room with a rectangular table with high-back chairs around it. Several comfortable chairs and a couch creates a more desirable atmosphere than does folding chairs. A large picture window to the outside is preferable to no windows. When choosing a site, these "creature comforts" should be the basis of the choice. If your group includes people who use wheelchairs, remember to include space and access for them.

LOCATION: The meeting should be held in a central location on several bus routes and arterials so individuals will find it easy to locate and get to by bus or car. The easier the meeting is to get to, the better the chances for good attendance.

MEETING SITES: Consider options from the list below when choosing a place to meet:

Schools (teachers' lounges, student lounges, comfortable classrooms)
Library meeting rooms
Churches
Youth centers
City buildings
Colleges and community colleges
Restaurant meeting rooms
Community centers
Facilitator's or participant's house
Group homes
Hospital meeting rooms
Local agency (Easter Seals, ARC)

The more possible sites you think of, the better your chances of finding the "perfect" solution. Write down the pros and cons of each site to keep in mind the desired qualities and to assist with the final decision.

MEETING TIME

Setting a day and time to meet which coincides with the schedules of recruited participants is necessary. Although setting a tentative day and time should be done before recruiting participants, it is also necessary to know the schedules and preferences of those who express an interest in attending. It is very possible that the day and time may have to be changed in order to get as many people as possible to the support group. Keep several days and times in mind so participants can say which they can attend.

As recruiting calls are made, day and time should be discussed in detail. Participants must be told when and where the meeting is, what time it starts and ends, and how many weeks it is scheduled to meet. Because they will be asked to make a weekly commitment if they join the support group, it is critical to get alternate suggestions from them if the initial day and time are not suitable. The day and time chosen should be the best for the majority of interested people, and there will always be a few who cannot be accommodated.

THE FIRST MEETING

The plan for the first meeting varies and depends on the make-up of the group and the personal style of the facilitators. An alternative plan should be in place for use if attendance and thus group composition are different from what is expected. Some groups may invite parents to part or all of the first support group meeting to relieve parental concerns. A suggested agenda and process for the first meeting is outlined in the steps below:

1. EXTEND A WELCOME. Thank them for taking the time to attend the support group. Reassure them that, although the group produces anxiety for some people, "fun" develops as everyone gets to know one another.

2. EXPLAIN THE AGENDA. People relax more if they know what will be happening.

3. PLAN A QUICK "GET-TO-KNOW-YOU" GAME. Teenagers dislike sitting and listening.

4. EXPLAIN THE HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE GROUP. Tell them what a support group is and why it is an important tool.

5. DISCUSS THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR. Explain the leadership role of the facilitators but stress the fact that

everyone can actually be a leader in the group. Participants will be asked to contribute to their group and thus can experience ownership of it. Facilitators will not take group time for their own problems; they are there to guide the group discussion.

6. DISCUSS THE ROLE OF THE PARTICIPANTS. Participants will probably be uncomfortable with this new group and uncertain of how to interact. Acknowledge this possibility and let them know that as they come to trust the facilitators and to know the group members, their roles as participants in the group will grow and change. Assure them that they will establish a comfort level as they become more and more involved with the group and will use the group as a safe place to express themselves, exercise leadership skills, and to learn and grow.

7. CONDUCT ANOTHER INTRODUCTION EXERCISE. Either go around the group and introduce yourselves (and share something) or play one of many different "ice-breaker" games.

8. TAKE A SHORT BREAK. Have snacks, juice, coffee available. Food is a natural relaxer and people feel comfortable talking around it.

9. DISCUSS BASIC GROUP GUIDELINES AND RULES. It is better to let the group decide on what rules it wants for itself, but group facilitators have to initiate the topic and guide the group toward appropriate rules. At the first meeting, it is probably adequate to discuss the concept of group rules and begin the agreement process. Postpone decision-making and adoption until the next meeting because there will probably be new members and some dropouts. The group should not be moved too quickly when it is just getting started.

10. ASK: "WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO HERE?" People may be unsure or unsure of their responses, so the facilitator must initiate conversation about what they want to do. Avoid giving them too many ideas because it is their group! Write a list of everything that is said regardless of relevance, and consider it at the next meeting when there can be an extended brainstorming session.

11. PLAY ANOTHER FUN GAME IF TIME REMAINS. The purpose of the first meeting is for everyone to get to know one another, feel comfortable with the group and its process, and want to come back next week. Keep the atmosphere fun and light and avoid anything that is threatening, challenging, or controlling.

12. CLOSE THE MEETING. If the group has done some effective interaction, go around the group and allow everyone the opportunity to talk and give feedback about the group. Discuss the group meeting time, place, and process. Are any changes needed? Is everyone feeling somewhat comfortable? Ask about commitment to the group. Acknowledge feelings of newness and

expectations and remember not to be too assertive and risk intimidating members. Thank them for coming and repeat the next meeting day, time, and place.

What happens if no one or just a few show up for the first meeting? DO NOT GIVE UP! Many of the most successful support groups start out slowly. Follow an abbreviated version of your agenda and plan to repeat it the next week. Talk about the attendance problem with the participants who are there. Ask them what suggestions they have. Find out why they decided to come and encourage them to continue coming. Ask them if they know anyone who may be interested in joining the support group.

CHAPTER 9

INTEREST AND ATTENDANCE: HOW CAN THEY BE MAINTAINED?

Growth, interaction, support, and self-direction are widely identified as important concepts to work towards as groups progress. To accomplish these general goals, it is necessary for the facilitators to stimulate and maintain the intensity, interest, energy, and the creativity of participants. Specifically, facilitators should focus on maintaining interest by ensuring member participation and attendance as well as avoiding their own burnout.

MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Common needs, challenges and experiences usually form the main reason for joining a support group. This opportunity for affiliation within a group is the common bond that holds the group together. It allows members positive identification and safe interaction with those who share this bond. Some members may not be ready or able to acknowledge consciously or fully the commonality they share with other group members. Until they are able to deal effectively with the issue of being disabled, other shared attributes such as age, hobbies, music, school, and/or other common interests can be focused on. The affiliation or identity process can then build at a slower pace.

Group participation means group ownership. By taking part in the group and enjoying their participation, members feel that it is their group. Participating members are much more likely to continue their attendance than those who do not actively take part in discussion and activities. The non-participating members may often feel they are attending "someone else's" meeting. Group facilitators must include everyone in the activity or discussion at hand, thereby offering the opportunity for ownership to all members.

Some group members will not need a facilitator's help to become involved. They may, however, require some direction to avoid monopolizing or overpowering the group. This type of dominating interaction from a group member can alienate others and make them feel resentful or disgusted with the process. The facilitators can create opportunities for the group to deal with and solve issues of under- or over-participation. By having the group resolve such issues, group ownership is further promoted.

Group ownership means empowerment. As group members attend, participate, affiliate, learn, resolve issues, and develop a sense of ownership, they also develop a realization that they can have an effect on the environment and those around them. Many disabled youth have not had an adequate opportunity to feel empowered in this sense.

IDEAS FOR GROUP FACILITATION

A variety of resources exist that group facilitators can use to encourage group participation. The companion volume to this replication manual, THE EMPOWERMENT DYNAMIC: SYNERGISTIC ACTIVITIES FOR SUPPORT GROUPS, contains one hundred pages of relevant, adaptable activities and ideas to utilize in a support setting. The activities listed therein have been used in several group settings and are ones that experienced facilitators have found particularly successful, motivating and growth-enhancing.

However, sometimes a motivating topic in and of itself will germinate its own "activity" of discussion without having to rely on an imposed structure. Such spontaneous activity is wonderful when it happens, and increasing the opportunities for such an outcome should be a goal of the group facilitators. This type of interaction means the participants are using their own energy to direct the course of the group rather than merely being along for the ride.

Group facilitators that worked for the Employability Support Network developed the following list of topics that proved to be effective "self-starters" - activities or ideas that initiate group participation:

- Identification of strengths
- Disability information
- Self-concept activities
- Civil rights
- Independent living
- Banking/money
- Information about jobs
- Attendant care
- Making friends
- Presentation of one's disability
- Different work conditions
- Why one should work
- Parental issues
- Role models
- Sharing experiences
- Following directions
- Mock interviews
- Visiting a job site
- Learning disabilities
- Assertiveness
- Communication/listening skills
- Using buses
- Resume writing
- Housing
- Driving
- Goal setting
- Accepting criticism
- Telephone/TDD calls
- Interests
- Fears
- How to follow a schedule
- Personal problem solving
- School problems
- Employer expectations
- Trust exercises

The Bibliography in section three lists additional books and resources with participatory activities and ideas for groups. Specifically, refer to subsections on curriculum: awareness, curriculum: employment, curriculum: social skills, and groups: activities.

ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS

Poor attendance of group meetings poses a challenge to facilitators. It is very difficult to appropriately lead a "group" activity when only one, two, or three members show up. Low attendance has a negative impact on those who do attend and casts doubt on the worthiness and viability of the group itself. Trouble-shooting reasons for poor attendance is a facilitator responsibility, and usually these reasons belong "within" the group or "outside" the group.

"Within" the group problems that negatively affect attendance include the following:

EXPECTATIONS NOT BEING MET. Was the group described differently than it actually turned out? Were expectations discussed during the initial stages? If this step is taken, it helps participants abandon unrealistic or mistaken ideas about what the group is or can be. This process also allows and augments the formation of realistic, positive expectations and gives facilitators valuable feedback to use in planning and implementing group activities. Members may feel everyone in the group should get along and thus will drop out if conflicts occur between others.

NEEDS NOT BEING MET. Needs and expectations are different. Needs include affiliation, respect, fun, a sense of caring, and being a valuable group member. Facilitators can concentrate on doing little things that contribute to meeting members' needs - extending a greeting, remembering a birthday, giving a job or responsibility, or asking a member's opinion.

ARE THE GROUP MEETINGS FUN? Do most group members have a good time? When do they smile? What part of the group meetings or type of activity do they enjoy most? Is there enough variety? Every meeting does not need to be and should not be a "heavy" encounter with everyone's problems. Do new, exciting things to avoid boredom. Bring in guest speakers. Go on a field trip (the group will have plenty of ideas). Have refreshments and food available; they are natural relaxers. Try new formats, activities, and topics.

"Outside" the group problems tend to center around a variety of external circumstances that are listed below:

CONFLICTING SCHEDULE COMMITMENTS. The group members would be there if they could, but there is something else they "have" to do. This reason can be legitimate, but is often used as an excuse. Follow through on finding out more about the situation. If it is a legitimate consideration, look into rescheduling the group meeting or the conflicting commitment.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES. Be creative in trying to solve the transportation puzzle. Think of alternatives: carpooling, public transportation, volunteer drivers, and service club assistance. Perhaps the location, time, and day of the meeting could be altered to better serve some members (see Chapter 7).

PARENTS UNWILLING TO ALLOW OR ASSIST MEMBERS TO ATTEND. If the facilitators hear from a member, "My parents say I can't come anymore," they should follow up on that comment. Find out why. Talk to the parent to assess what the problem is and what are possible solutions. Sometimes a member is told he/she cannot attend due to the parent hearing or assuming inaccurate information. Clear up any misinformation.

FORGETFULNESS. If members forget meetings often, have the group figure out a way to remind the forgetful ones. Strategies that have proven effective include a telephone tree, a "buddy" system, and attendance awards.

In order to avoid attendance problems, consider establishing an attendance policy. Each group has unique needs. Let the group formulate the attendance policy if one is needed. Make sure they do not include punitive, non-supportive measures for non-attendance. Instead focus on positive, rewarding measures for those who do attend. Consider instituting a group rule that members must call someone to tell them if they cannot be there.

CONTINUOUS RECRUITMENT

Recruitment from a waiting list is suggested as a strategy to head off any problems arising from losing group members. It is a positive step to attempt to add new members if it becomes necessary for group members to leave the group for any reason (schedule conflicts, a new job, and/or lack of interest). Be sure to process the departure of a group member; members may often encourage the person not to quit or to return if he/she wishes. The remaining group participants also need to have the value and importance of the group validated. If members begin

leaving and group meetings get smaller, it makes group maintenance much more difficult.

Sometimes a well-established group, however, is reluctant to include new members. This reluctance is understandable due to the private and personal nature of some of the topics and projects undertaken by a group. The situation does present an opportunity for group members to work through their feelings of group ownership, privacy, helping others, and sharing.

FACILITATOR MAINTENANCE

The facilitators' energy and enthusiasm need to be maintained to ensure a viable support group. Administrative staff should gather facilitators together on a regular basis to discuss techniques, share positive happenings, solve group related problems, share resources, and generally support each other. Gatherings such as potlucks, dinner meetings, and softball games give facilitators an opportunity to learn from the experience of their colleagues. If the program's contingent of facilitators is too small to warrant planning these types of activities, plan in-service training or budget for attendance at a conference. The facilitators need this kind of input and appreciation to perform successfully.

CHAPTER 10

ISSUES AND HEADACHES: HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

Problems are to be expected when undertaking a support group project. People and groups have problems; a support group will have both individual and group problems. Sometimes the support group itself will solve its difficulties without the facilitator's assistance; sometimes the facilitator will have to point out the problem and allow the group to solve it; other times the facilitators themselves will have to provide the solution.

Deciding when and how to intervene is always a question for facilitators. As facilitators get to know participants and the interaction pattern of the group, the process of intervention is easier but still is a difficult decision. Facilitator intervention is difficult because it is contrary to one of the goals a facilitator usually has for the group - to allow and encourage the group members to deal effectively with their own problems.

Facilitators must look at the individuals involved in regard to their skill and comfort levels in problem-solving. Ultimately, as various problems arise, the group should decide which solutions are appropriate. However, the facilitator is the responsible party and many times initiates the opportunity for solutions to occur. Sometimes the decision about the solution will be made in a split second; other times it will be made over a long period of time. In either case, to come to a group agreement, the facilitator must remember that group members should discuss the issue and its resolution.

The common issues that arise in the internal operation of a support group are member problems of domination, interruption, quietness, and the use of communication devices. Proposed solutions to these issues are presented in the next few pages to foster facilitators' thought processes regarding problem-solving. Remember also that lack of consistent attendance is often a very large problem; this issue and solutions are included in Chapter 9.

DOMINATION

Dealing with group dominators is a significant issue that support groups must face. Dominators are group members who take up most of the group time with their problems even after the

group has focused attention on them. Many times these problems are either overdramatized or are not common to other members. Even after the group has assisted, the dominator is not satisfied or brings up other issues. Basically, the dominator does not allow all group members equal time; he/she monopolizes the group for his/her needs.

All groups have dominators; most can be kept "in line" through varying degrees of group (or facilitator) reminders. In some groups, facilitators themselves may have to be reminded by the group itself not to dominate. One of the best ways of dealing with dominators is to stop them before they begin dominating the group's time and attention. This method means setting up group rules and expectations when the group is formed. Thus, a setting is created where all group members feel like they have control over situations.

The pressure of group members keeps the problem of domination at a reasonable level most of the time. It might take a little coaxing from facilitators at first to get members to talk about the issue in the presence of the dominator. Facilitators may have fewer problems controlling these discussions once the issue is out in the open and members understand that this behavior is not acceptable and that they can talk directly to the perpetrator about their reactions.

As with other problems, how the facilitator chooses to handle dominators depends on the skill level of the group. There are many reasons for dominator behavior; some people do not know that they are monopolizing the group; some do it for attention; others just enjoy talking; and still others are bored with group issues. Facilitators should figure out why the person is dominating and brainstorm ideas for resolution before going to the group. The group may deal with the issue on its own, but if facilitators must bring it up, they should have some ideas beforehand.

INTERRUPTION

Interrupting behaviors are another common frustration of groups. Everyone interrupts at times and there will be moments when everyone is talking at once. Young people especially tend to act in this undisciplined way. This behavior becomes an issue when one or two group participants constantly interrupt other members or the group process.

Again, when evaluating the problem and its solution, look at the skill level of the individual(s)/culprit(s) and possible causes. Facilitators may have to remind members of the group rules, such as "everyone takes turns," at the beginning of

every meeting. The facilitator or a group member may have to sit next to one member and work out a system to remind him/her physically or verbally when he/she is interrupting. Some groups may have to retreat to hand raising so people learn to take turns. However, in most instances, group members will keep each other in line by reminding one another what it feels like to be interrupted.

QUIETNESS

The quiet group or quiet member may be as difficult as the dominator to deal with. Many people, especially if they are facilitators, are uncomfortable with quietness in a group. It is natural that group members will be quiet until they feel comfortable in the group. A facilitator should begin getting concerned if they continue to be quiet after several meetings have occurred.

The basic strategy to deal with a quiet group of individuals is to structure or create opportunities for them to contribute. Allow them the freedom to choose not to contribute while encouraging them to talk. If the entire group is quiet, structure numerous interactive activities that require members to communicate. At first, facilitators may have to tell members what to say and how to say it (actually put words in their mouth), but as the group continues, less and less of this type of structure will be needed. Remember to talk about the problem of quietness, the need to communicate, and be clear with participants what steps you are taking and why you are taking them. Have group members make goals specifically related to communication, and work on those goals through discussions and exercises.

COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Including members that use communication boards and other devices may also create challenges for a support group. Usually these members are slower in their communications, and commun-ication to a group is difficult under these circumstances. Some group members (facilitators included) may become impatient. Again, the solution is to discuss this issue during the first few meetings. Explain that everyone's contribution is important to the group's success and that everyone will have to learn some patience. She or he may take longer, but he or she has something to say just like everyone else. Put group members in each other's shoes. Usually, everyone will be patient.

To speed up the process, in some situations it may be appropriate to encourage the person to begin communication before it is his/her turn. Depending on the topic, it may also be appropriate to talk while the person is preparing his/her communication. If either of these options is used, clearly discuss everyone's feelings. If there are disagreements, the best thing to do is to sit quietly and listen to the person.

USE OF INTERPRETERS

In some groups, the use of interpreters may be both useful and necessary. This is particularly true when working with individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired, but it is also helpful with those who speak a different language than the majority of the group. As with communication devices, talking with the group about the use of interpreters and diiscussing the smoothest method of communication will make the group more at ease and potential problems will be lessened.

CHAPTER 11

TERMINATION: HOW TO END A SUPPORT GROUP

How the support group ends is just as important and perhaps even more important than how it begins. The issues around ending or disbanding the support group are not easy ones for either facilitators or group members. Some group members will struggle with this issue; others will be more ready to face it. No matter how difficult the issues around ending are, the group should not be allowed to just dwindle and die. In the long run, an unacknowledged ending could create bad feelings and hurt participants.

Plans of terminating the group should be discussed well ahead of time. If no official ending was mentioned during recruitment or the first meeting, this discussion becomes vitally important. Even if an ending date was set before the group began, keep them reminded because they may forget throughout the course of the group. Do they want to meet during the summer or restart in the fall? Who can continue, who cannot, and why? What is the group's agenda if they do want to continue? A major question is whether facilitators can continue and if a sponsor is available to provide resources such as a budget and a meeting place. A few weeks may be needed to discuss all the issues around ending the support group, even if the group is suspended just for the summer. The decision should be approached slowly if some members have problems with the notion of termination.

Discussion about ending the group may include the following topics:

EVALUATION OF THE GROUP. Formal or informal evaluations give facilitators feedback and members information about what they learned from the group (see Chapter 12). What do members want different next year if the group is to continue? What would they recommend - different topics, meeting space, and time; and/or more field trips or guest speakers?

PLANS TO GET TOGETHER. Whether ending for the summer or permanently, members may want to plan a "get-together" after the termination. If there is a consensus among the group that they want to gather once or twice socially during the summer or after the group ends, decide who will be in charge of organizing it. Encourage two or three members to share the organizational responsibility and make sure details such as the sharing of phone numbers and addresses are handled.

SELF-PERPETUATION. Initiate a discussion around the idea that it is possible for the group to continue without adult facilitators. The group members could take turns leading or could choose two members to facilitate together. Youth may take awhile to absorb and accept this idea, so raise the possibility early in the calendar of group meetings. Remember, an original goal was to have the facilitators move to the background.

Finally, if a decision is made by the group and facilitator(s) to end the group, a ceremonial gathering should be planned either for the final meeting or on another occasion. Do something fun!!! Have a pizza party, ice cream party, potluck, or go to a movie or out to dinner. Make it special; end on a positive note. Make the event an official "this is the end, good-bye, keep in touch, look at what we did, victory celebration." Everyone should be involved!

CHAPTER 12

EVALUATION: ASSESSING THE GROUP'S EFFECTIVENESS

Is the group having an impact? How? Sponsors, administrators, facilitators, parents, and teachers will be interested in how the support group is proceeding and what is being accomplished. Participants will also be eager to have an assessment of their progress. Either formally or informally, evaluation of the group or program must be done. What areas to be evaluated must be directly linked to the project's original goals and objectives.

An administrator's task is to ensure that the support group is running smoothly and meeting the needs of its members. This task can be completed by keeping in close contact with the facilitators. In this way, the administrator can collect data such as attendance and group topics and, at the same time, be apprised of any problems or issues that need administrative attention.

A program must be able to justify its existence. Whether formal or informal evaluation techniques are used, the program must be able to answer questions such as "What good is being done?" or "What is my son/daughter getting out of the group?" or "What activities are the support group engaged in?"

Because the Employability Support Network was a federally funded model transition program, an intensive evaluation was required by the grantors. The project used many different evaluation tools.

GROUP FACILITATORS. Facilitators filled out weekly group analysis forms which kept track of attendance, group topics and any problems or concerns about the group. A time sheet was attached to this form; in order to be paid, facilitators had to fill out the form. The group analysis form fulfilled two important functions. First, it gave vital information about the groups to the supervisor and the grant; and second, and perhaps more important, it made the supervisor aware of problems the group or facilitators were having so that if necessary, an intervention could be planned. Both co-facilitators filled out the form separately so that the supervisor could gain both perspectives and foresee potential conflicts (see Exhibit 10).

Group facilitators also rated each participant's progress and interaction on a monthly basis through the monthly individual evaluation form (see Exhibit 11). At the end of the group year, the facilitators reported areas of growth for each group participant.

The facilitators are the most reliable sources of data because they have been with the participants for five months or more. They also have direct knowledge about what they have been doing in the support group. This data is fairly easy to collect and is reliable.

Group participants: Youth completed a self-esteem scale at the beginning and end of the group. This was an attempt to measure in many cases, but measurable data was required. The self-esteem measures are discussed in detail later. A pre and post skills checklist was used for awhile, but it was found that group participants gave unreliable data, so it was discontinued.

At the end of the group, participants were asked to fill out a youth evaluation of the group (see Exhibit 12), which asked about what they had learned, if they enjoyed the group, and their reactions to their group facilitators. This not only gave useable evaluation data for the project, but validated facilitator effectiveness.

Parents and Teachers: Parents and teachers (or significant others) were contacted near the end of the group for feedback about the group participants. A parent/teacher information form (see Exhibit 13) was mailed to them with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. It asked them to share their impressions of the impact the group had on their daughter/son/student. This type of feedback is highly subjective and difficult to measure, however, it provides significant insight into the group's impact on participants and families.

Evaluation Conclusions

Evaluation of a support group poses several problems. First, support groups usually focus on topics that are not easily measured objectively. For example, a primary evaluation topic for youth is self-concept. There are a few standardized profiles available to measure self-concept, but trying to use these profiles is difficult with sub-populations such as youth with disabilities. The State-Trait Self-Concepts Scale and Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory are two of the most widely recognized self-concept measures, but limitations with these tools include difficulty in administration and a design which does not measure change over time.

To better meet the needs of the project, our staff collaborated with a psychologist, who also served as an SED group facilitator, to develop a self-esteem scale (see Exhibit 14). This non-standardized tool is short, easy to administer, and easy for youth to complete.

An interesting finding related to the data collected on the self-esteem assessments was observed. Some participants' perception of their self-esteem increased, which we hoped and expected would occur. However, in others self-esteem decreased. This was an unexpected outcome. But, upon further investigation, it appears that this decrease may have been due to these young people coming into the group with an inflated, unrealistic sense of self-esteem that over time and through group involvement and participation was brought into a clearer, more realistic perception. This more realistic outlook is certainly a positive outcome.

Other pre and post tools may be used to measure social skills, independent living skills, and other areas. Before using any of these evaluation measures, know why this particular data is necessary to collect. Evaluation tools should provide useable information and be feasible to administer. Remember to take into consideration the time it takes to fill out these instruments and the skill level of group participants. Pencil and paper tasks are not usually a favorite of youth, and "tests" can be seen as threatening activities.

A second issue in evaluating support groups is confidentiality. The most important rule in most support groups is that nothing anyone says goes beyond that room. Of course, such a rule makes it very difficult for interested others to know what the group and participants are accomplishing. Usually, this potential problem is solved by speaking in general terms about the group's focus and main topics.

However, depending on whom the evaluation is being conducted for, it may be necessary to obtain information about what each individual participant is learning. Individual evaluation information may be gathered from direct sources such as participants and facilitators or indirect sources such as parents and teachers.

In the final analysis, the members will tell you whether the group is "successful." If they attend the support group on a regular basis, the group is probably doing what it is supposed to be doing. Youth will only attend a non-required support group if it is meeting their needs.

Exhibit 10

GROUP MEETING ANALYSIS FORM

Please complete this form immediately following each group meeting.

GROUP _____

Date of Meeting _____ Length of Meeting _____

Filled out by _____

Co-facilitator _____

Number of Participants in Attendance _____

Main Topic _____

Other Issues Discussed:

Did you use any Handbook activities? Which ones? How did it (they) work?

Activities and ideas worth sharing:

Group Problems?

Action Taken:

Group Intervention Today?

Help or resources needed for your group?

Comments on interaction with co-facilitator?

Other comments:

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Exhibit 11

MONTHLY INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION

PARTICIPANT _____ DATE _____

FACILITATORS _____ GROUP _____

1. Is individual progress being made toward previously defined goal(s)?
   (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Very much)

COMMENTS _____

2. Is this participant interactive and open in the group (e.g., sincere, honest)?
   (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Very much)

COMMENTS _____

3. Is this participant learning behaviors appropriate to the group setting?
   (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Very much)

COMMENTS _____

4. Does the group respond appropriately to this participant's contributions?
   (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Very much)

COMMENTS _____

5. Specifically, what gains or growth do you feel this participant has made in the last month? _____

_____

6. Has this participant experienced or posed any special problems? If so, how did you and the group deal with this? _____

_____

7. Have there been any "great" successes for this individual in the group? _____

_____

Exhibit 12

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK
Youth Evaluation of Group

Group Name: _____

1. Did you know most of the members of your group before it began?
Yes___ No___

2. Do you now consider some of your group members as friends?
Yes___ No __

3. Have you enjoyed your group?
(circle one) a lot a little not at all

4. How much did you learn in your group?
(circle one) a lot a little nothing

5. Has anything you've learned in your support group been useful to you?
Yes ___ No ____

6. Check the topics below that you have learned about in your support group: (Check as many as apply.)

____ how to look for a job
____ adult living options
____ jobs in the community
____ resume writing
____ self confidence
____ public transportation
____ working in a group
____ communications skills
____ educational options
____ other_____

____ independent living skills
____ problem solving skills
____ personal abilities & limitations
____ opportunities beyond high school
____ how to act on a job interview
____ assertiveness
____ forming/maintaining friendships
____ resources (Voc. Rehab., Mental Health, Social Security)

7. Do you presently have a job? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, what is it?

_____

8. Are you seeking a job? Yes ____ No ____

9. How much did your group facilitators allow you to choose what you did in your group?
(circle one) a lot a little none

10. How good of a job did your facilitators do?
(circle one) Very good Good Bad Very Bad

PLEASE WRITE ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT YOUR GROUP IN THE SPACE BELOW

Exhibit 13

THE OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

CRIPPLED CHILDREN'S DIVISION Child Development & Rehabilitation Center P.O. Box 574 Portland, OR 97207
Crippled Children's Services
University Affiliated Program

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK OF DISABLED YOUTH
PARENT INFORMATION FORM

The youth named below has been participating in the Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth. Please take a moment to answer the following questions. Please return this form in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

1. Are you aware _____ is in a support group? Yes ___ No ___

2. Do you feel the support group has had a positive influence on this participant? Share your impressions. Yes ___ No ___

_____

_____

3. Is this participant better prepared for getting a job now than prior to his/her involvement in the support group? Yes ___ No ___

4. Please rate the amount of growth shown by this student in the last six months, due to his/her participation in the Employability Support Network.

	No growth	(1 to 5 scale)			High growth
a. self concept	1	2	3	4	5
b. job awareness	1	2	3	4	5
c. communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
d. independent living skills	1	2	3	4	5
e. awareness of personal abilities and disabilities	1	2	3	4	5
f. group interaction	1	2	3	4	5
g. use and awareness of public transportation systems	1	2	3	4	5
h. job readiness	1	2	3	4	5
i. goal setting and achievement	1	2	3	4	5
j. cooperating with others	1	2	3	4	5
k. job search skills (i.e., phone use, resumes, interviewing, want ad use etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

5. Would you refer other youth to the Employability Support Network of Disabled Youth? Yes ___ No ___

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Exhibit 14

EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT NETWORK OF DISABLED YOUTH

SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Name: _____

DIRECTIONS: Read each of the statements and decide how often they are true about you. Then: Circle the 0 if your answer is never.
Circle the 1 if your answer is sometimes.
Circle the 2 if your answer is most of the time.
Circle the 3 if your answer is always.

PART A.

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
1) I am proud to be me.	0	1	2	3
2) I get along with my family pretty well.	0	1	2	3
3) My parents are proud of me.	0	1	2	3
4) I make friends easily.	0	1	2	3
5) I look nice.	0	1	2	3
6) I am kind to others.	0	1	2	3
7) I am a moral person.	0	1	2	3
8) I am a good person.	0	1	2	3
9) I am careful about my appearance.	0	1	2	3
10. People like to have me join their group or be on their team.	0	1	2	3

PART B.

1) I can control my temper.	0	1	2	3
2) I look forward to doing new things.	0	1	2	3
3) I am a responsible person.	0	1	2	3
4) When I want to learn something, I keep trying until I get it.	0	1	2	3
5) I get things done when I say I will.	0	1	2	3
6) I am as independent as I can be.	0	1	2	3
7) I am honest and direct with people.	0	1	2	3
8) I set goals in order to accomplish certain things.	0	1	2	3
9) I can handle stress pretty well.	0	1	2	3
10. I am willing to listen to other people's ideas, even if they are different than mine.	0	1	2	3